# THE WORLD.

## NUMBER CXVII.

By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

*To be continued every* THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *March* the 27th, 1755.

*In nova fert animus.* — OVID.

THERE is perhaps no paſſion, which more ſtrongly marks the general character of mankind, which operates more forcibly, or actuates more univerſally than the deſire of NOVELTY. It's effects appear conſpicuous in proportion as every age or nation is advanced in thoſe refinements which are the natural conſequence of an extenſive intercourſe with other countries, and of wealth, ſecurity and eaſe, under the lenity of a free government.

THE Athenians, the moſt poliſhed nation in all antiquity, and who enjoyed theſe advantages in the higheſt degree, were, if we may truſt their own writers, as paſſionately fond of the SOMETHING NEW as my own countrymen can poſſibly be; nay, far exceeded them: for however great may be the expence to which we have puſhed our invention of freſh objects for the public

amuſement,

amuſement, yet we muſt yield the ſuperiority, no leſs in extravagance, than we do in taſte, to a people, who expended the treaſure which was deſtined to clothe and feed an army, or to man a fleet, on diverſions and entertainments at home. It may ſurprize ſome of our gayeſt moderns to inform them, that, without ridotto's, maſquerades and opera's, the charge only of acting three tragedies of Sophocles amounted to the ſum total of the ſupplies raiſed for the ſervice of the republic in a general war.

The paſſion for novelty, as it acts on different ſubjects, has very different conſequences. When religion or government are it's objects, it is the ſource of moſt terrible evils. New men and new models have been the dread of the wiſeſt politicians; and when things are tolerably well, to maintain them upon the old footing, has been generally thought the ſafeſt maxim for the happineſs of the community. Too great a deſire of novelty, either in the governed, or in the governing, has often diſturbed the peace of kingdoms. When it goes no farther than to decide the dreſs of the perſon, or the ornaments of our equipage, all is ſafe; it's higheſt degree of exceſs will then only afford a ſubject of ridicule. A ſmart-cocked hat, or embroidered ſleeve, a ſhort petticoat or well-fancied furbelow, will neither endanger the church, nor embroil the ſtate. The purſuit indeed of ſuch kind of novelties may rather occaſion many advantages to the public; while that vanity which is abſurd in the particular, is uſeful in the general. Novelty and faſhion are the ſource and ſupport of trade, by conſtantly ſupplying matter for the employment of induſtry. By encreaſing the wants, they encreaſe the connections of mankind; and ſo long as they do not, by too great an extravagance, defeat their own end, in diſabling the

rich

rich from paying the reward of that induſtry to the poor, they anſwer excellent purpoſes of ſociety.

Not only the improvements of every invention for the convenience and eaſe of life, but even of thoſe which conſtitute it's real ornament, are owing to this deſire of novelty. Yet here too we may grow wanton; and nature ſeems to have ſet us bounds, which we cannot paſs without running into great abſurdities. For the very principle which has contributed to the perfection of the finer arts, may become the cauſe of their degeneracy and corruption. The ſearch of the SOMETHING NEW, has ſtep by ſtep conducted mankind to the diſcovery of all that is truly beautiful in thoſe arts; and the ſame ſearch (for the deſire of novelty never ſtops) already begins to urge us beyond that point to which a juſt taſte ſhould always confine itſelf.

Hence it is that muſical compoſition ceaſes to be admired merely for touching the paſſions, and for changing the emotions of the heart from the ſoft to the ſtrong, from the amorous to the fierce, or from the gay to the melancholy, and only ſeems to be then conſidered as highly excellent, when it impreſſes us with the idea of difficulty in the execution.

Images unnatural and unconnected, and a ſtyle quaint and embarraſſed with it's own pomp, but void of meaning and ſentiment, will always be the conſequence of endeavouring, in the ſame way, to introduce a new taſte into poetry. Hence it will become vehement without ſtrength, and ornamented without beauty; and the native, warm, and ſoftly winning language of that amiable miſtreſs, will ceaſe to pleaſe her more judicious lovers by an affectation of pleaſing only in a new manner.

STRANGE as it may appear that this ſhould find admirers, yet it is not any more to be wondered at than the applauſe which is ſo fondly given to Chineſe decorations, or to the barbarous productions of a Gothic genius, which ſeems once more to threaten the ruin of that ſimplicity which diſtinguiſhed the Greek and Roman arts as eternally ſuperior to thoſe of every other nation.

FEW men are endued with a juſt taſte; that is, with an aptitude to diſcover what is proper, fit and right, and conſequently beautiful, in the ſeveral objects which offer themſelves to their view. Though beauty in theſe external objects, like truth in thoſe of the underſtanding, is ſelf-evident and immutable, yet, like truth, it may be ſeen perverſely, or not at all, becauſe not conſidered. Now all men are equally ſtruck with the novelty of an appearance; but few, after this firſt emotion, call in their judgment to correct the deciſion of their eye, and to tell them whether the pleaſure they feel has any other cauſe than mere novelty. It is certain that a frequent review and comparing of the ſame objects together would greatly improve an indifferent taſte; and that hardly any one would be unable to determine, when once accuſtomed to ſuch an attention, whether the proportions of architecture taken from the theatre of Marcellus at Rome, or from the emperor of China's palace at Pekin, produced the moſt agreeable forms.

THE preſent vogue of Chineſe and Gothic architecture has, beſides it's novelty, another cauſe of it's good reception; which is, that there is no difficulty in being meerly WHIMSICAL. A ſpirit capable of entering into all the beauties of antique ſimplicity, is the portion of minds uſed to reflection, and the reſult of a corrected judgment: but here all men are equal. A manner confined to no rules cannot fail of having the crowd of imi-

tators

tators in it's party, where novelty is the ſole criterion of elegance. It is no objection, that the very end of all building is forgot; that all reference to uſe and climate, all relation of one proportion to another, of the thing ſupporting to the thing ſupported, of the acceſſory to the principal, and of the parts to the whole, is often entirely ſubverted.

THE paintings, which like the architecture, continually revolt againſt the truth of things, as little ſurely deſerve the name of elegant. Falſe lights, falſe ſhadows, falſe perſpective and proportions, gay colours, without that gradation of tints, that mutual variety of enlightened and darkened objects which relieve and give force to each other, at the ſame time that they give eaſe and repoſe to the eye, in ſhort, every incoherent combination of forms in nature, without expreſſion and without meaning, are the eſſentials of Chineſe painting,

As this Chineſe and Gothic ſpirit has begun to deform ſome of the fineſt ſtreets in this capital, whenever an academy ſhall be founded for the promoting the arts of ſculpture, painting and architecture, ſome ſcheme ſhould be thought of at the ſame time to diſcourage the encroachment of this pretended elegance; and an ANTI-CHINESE ſociety will be a much more important inſtitution in the world of arts, than the ANTI-GALLICAN in that of politics. A correſpondent of mine, I dare ſay, would be glad to be a member of it, if we may be allowed to judge of his ſentiments from the following letter.

MR. FITZ-ADAM,

I AM married to a lady of great fortune, of which, as I had little or none myſelf, ſhe has reſerved the ſole diſpoſition to her own management by the marriage articles. She is paſſionately fond of novelty, and changes her dreſs and furniture as often almoſt as ſhe does her temper.